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WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT  
PROGRAM CONCERNS  
in  
FRANCOPHONE SAHEL

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Report of a Workshop    July 5 - 7, 1979    Bobo-Dioulasso, Upper Volta

United States Agency for International Development

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## SUMMARY

The purpose of the workshop was to exchange experiences and develop ideas for programming that improves women's participation, is responsive to women's needs, and results in better development.

AID programmers working in Sahel countries met with AID/Washington, Peace Corps and PVO representatives from Upper Volta in Bobo-Dioulasso for three days.

Projects in Sahelian priority areas of water, food, training and credit were analyzed for development effect, particularly with regard to women and their participation.

Many recommendations for improved programming resulted. These have been communicated to Sahel missions and AID/Washington via the cable message which follows. They serve as an agenda for action which workshop participants agreed to discuss with co-workers and host country counterparts, women's organizations and regional bodies. Each group is to make contributions to the recommendations and work together to devise plans of action to implement them. The Office of Women in Development will act as coordinator of feedback among these points, in addition to elaborating their own plan of action.

This report is a working document to facilitate followup discussions and the formulation of plans of action in the Sahel. It will also be used as a point of departure in discussions with the regional bureaus of AID, examining the Sahel experience for usefulness in other regions.

## RECOMMENDATIONS \*

**(A) Participation.** The participation of people, especially women, as basic resource of development must be deliberately included at all levels of project definition and implementation, especially needs assessment by the rural poor themselves.

Workshop recommends that:

- AID missions work with existing women's organizations in identifying and assisting in development activities which address key issues specific to rural and urban women and girls;
- AID translate more documents into French;
- missions enhance participation of women in development by designing projects that address women through R & D and project applications in education, health, agriculture, water, ecology, technology, information, community development, livestock, marketing, small industries, infant health, nutrition, wood as cooking fuel, artisanal activities, food processing and storage, functional literacy, and training by function and need.

Workshop participants concluded that good women in development projects are simply good development projects for everyone, including women.

**(B) Project Process.** To insure that concern for women's needs and wants is incorporated in projects, recommend that AID:

- strengthen requirement in PID, PP and CDSS documents that women's needs be explored in depth, especially at village level;
- incorporate WID in each sector description, rather than isolate as separate item;
- include more women on project design and implementation teams, both expatriates and host country nationals;
- recognize that quick project results are in most cases not possible, and set realistic milestones for project accomplishments. This is particularly true for WID projects, most of which are experimental and may not follow established patterns;
- systematically investigate during the project design phase the potential role of local women's organizations in integrated projects;
- strengthen the role of mission WID officer and widen degree of his/her participation in project design process;

\*As listed in the cable

- bring more AID/W policy-makers to the field to expose them to problems of involving women in the development process;
- review the evaluation process, particularly with regard to women, to accord more recognition to social indicators, especially the simple fact that a group of people may have participated, or taken leadership in their own development. This is as important as AID's current stress on quantifiable indicators of progress (e. g. number of loans processed, number of buildings constructed).

**(C) Effects of Projects on Development.** Case studies showed various effects, both positive and negative. Negative effects resulted from lack of participation of host country people at all levels of the project as well as failure to adequately address the role of women in project sectors and activities.

Recommend that AID:

- increase hiring of women nationals in professional positions, and other staff who speak the language(s) of the country;
- work in closer collaboration with Peace Corps and PVOs on WID projects.

**(D) Role of Host Country Women's Organizations and Government.** Analysis of case studies and field experience revealed that the existence and participation of local village organizations including women's organizations, and of effective government infrastructure at all levels may be a crucial factor in implementing projects.

Recommend that:

- AID, assisted by local people familiar with and knowledgeable about such groups, collect data on women's organizations in country and how they can participate in projects.

**(E) WID Specific vs. Integrated Projects.** Recognizing that both types of projects have value according to conditions, recommend that:

- projects or components targeted principally to women should be designed and implemented when the socio-cultural environment indicates that without particular emphasis on their needs, women would in all likelihood be excluded as beneficiaries/ participants;
- integrated rural development projects should address women's roles in all sectors, e. g. agriculture, livestock, water.

**(F) Credit.** Making credit available to Sahelian women is a new project intervention, which is only now beginning to be implemented in a few cases, notably the SWID (Strengthening Women's Roles in Development) and TWIS (Training of Women in the Sahel) projects in Upper Volta.

**Recommend that:**

- == information about traditional informal credit as well as commercial and governmental systems be analyzed to improve knowledge and to design projects for better access to credit for women as agriculturalists, pastoralists, or urban dwellers;**
- == credit be delivered in accord with successful experiences, complying with seasonal and climatic variations;**
- == criteria for access to credit be reflective of contemporary social and economic needs and locally-specific conditions, including administrative absorptive capacity;**
- == credit systems be simplified and decentralized to meet short and long term needs of rural women.**

- (G) In-country Resources.** That AID missions identify in-country resources so as to avoid the creation of dependencies by women on external sources of expertise, funding, technology and leadership;
- == PVO representatives challenged workshop attendees to incorporate in-kind contributions on the part of project participants into design;**
  - == that self-help funds (e. g. Ambassador's) be expanded.**

- (H) Technology.** That the current interest in improved rural technology, particularly with regard to energy and resource conservation, be directed toward women;
- == that more attention be given to technology improvements potentially acceptable in the Sahel including cookstoves, woodlots, water pumps, and small industry uses such as food processing and the making of household items-- pots, soap, etc.;**
  - == that women play a key role in determining technologies appropriate to their needs;**
  - == that access to greater physical resources and improved technologies be made available, especially to women, through a wide range of credit, information, investment and training programs.**

- (I) Training.** That field-based training in Sahel-specific WID concerns be supported for a variety of people, using local training facilities and capabilities and, where appropriate, in local languages;
- == that training concentrate on design and management of projects;**
  - == that some of the training take place on project sites for maximum practical effect.**

- (J) Information and Networking.** That missions maintain a current source file concerning women's social, cultural and political roles, by country regions including PP Social Soundness Analyses;
- that Sahelian networks be established or reinforced to share and disseminate information, including site trips and training of illiterate and literate women;
  - that the networks include information exchange and documentation on intermediate technology, access to local and regional technical and human resources assistance;
  - that information on WID concerns be exchanged on a continuing basis among workshop participants, and among others holding such meetings, as well as among host country nationals, AID missions, Peace Corps and PVOs;
  - that PPC/WID take responsibility for information from Washington being fed back into the field on reactions to the workshop and its recommendations.
- (K) Coordination with Other Donors.** That coordination with other donors, CILSS, Peace Corps and PVOs be strengthened so that project efforts are improved and duplication avoided as other donors become increasingly interested in WID projects, particularly in the Sahel.
- (L) UN Decade for Women.** That participation of Sahelian women in the Lusaka Regional Conference October 17 - 20 is important and that USAID missions support their travel;
- that Sahel women be aided in attending the mid-Decade conference in Copenhagen in 1980.
- (M) Changing Conditions in the Sahel.** It was noted that women's world in the Sahel is rapidly changing and will be increasingly affected by migration, urbanization, technology, commercialization and industrialization, changing work roles, the alteration of family units and the expansion of educational opportunities for women. These changing factors must be built into WID programming.

## BACKGROUND

The workshop--a do-it-yourself, short-notice gathering-- was prompted by the conjunction of several interests.

The AID Mission in Upper Volta, under Director John Hoskins, had since 1975 been developing projects for women which grew out of the well-known Equal Access to Education Project. The projects are innovative. However, their path has been far from smooth. Difficulties in implementing the project "Strengthening the Role of Women in Development (SWID)" prompted a recent evaluation, and in turn, this workshop.

The Assistant Administrator for Africa, Goler Butcher, has for some time had strong interest in seeing how women might be better integrated into Africa Bureau programs, and has designated special staff to evaluate programs for that effect.

Jim Kelly, Director of Sahel and Francophone West African Affairs, gave his strong support from the very beginning, recognizing the potential of this workshop to provide ideas for program action of benefit to Sahelian women.

Arvonne Fraser, the Coordinator of the Office of Women in Development, is focussing on field operations after a period of support to US-based conferences and data gathering projects aimed at generating information and stimulating awareness of women in development issues.

The 1980 mid-point evaluation of the Decade for Women provides the opportunity to assess what has been done to implement the World Plan of Action, and what has resulted from these efforts.

These factors, coupled with a Washington meeting of Sahel Mission Directors, provided the opportunity. The catalyst was Barbara Skapa (USAID Upper Volta). Her exchange with Jo Anne Murphy Ba (USAID Senegal) about programming problems led to a cable to Arvonne Fraser requesting support for a workshop of Francophone Sahel AID program officers with WID responsibilities and concerns.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This workshop would not have happened without the support and participation of those already mentioned elsewhere in this report.

The Upper Volta Mission and Embassy responded to workshop activity in a busy season with equanimity and energetic collaboration.

Special thanks are due to--

Ambassador Thomas Boyatt

Director John Hoskins

Deputy Director Richard Meyer

Organizer Barbara Skapa

USAID Upper Volta staff, including secretaries, receptionist, translators, and everyone in the motor pool

Staff of CESAO (Centre d'Etudes Economiques et Sociales de l'Afrique de l'Ouest)

Drafting group Sid Bliss, Maryanne Dulansey, Arvonne Fraser, Mary Ann Riegelman, Peggy Shaw, and Barbara Skapa.

## THE PROCESS

The process which evolved during the workshop is noted so that it may be used by others in similar gatherings, or in project analysis.

### OBJECTIVE

Participants came to the workshop to exchange specific programming experiences, the "nuts and bolts" of planning and implementing projects that improve women's participation, better respond to their needs, and result in better development.

### NEEDS ASSESSMENT

#### Key Programming Factors

The participants talked about their expectations, needs, problems and concerns, which were listed on a chart. Often one person's comment touched off a group discussion, prompted other perspectives, and allowed some consensus to arise. The facilitator helped the group process the list, subsuming the many points into six common areas.\* While some lack of clarity remained, the six topics were agreed upon as being the most important problems/issues/factors influencing WID programming, according to the experience of the participants.

#### Sahel Priority Needs

An equally important concern was the priority needs of the Sahel--water, food, livestock. It was felt that there is a tendency to look at women's needs outside this framework. Participants rejected this tendency, illustrating how Sahelian women are centrally involved in these activities. They generated a list of key words which indicate the complexity of each sector, conditions specific to the Sahel, women's roles, and other factors inadequately addressed in projects. Other needs were added to the list--health, training, credit.

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\*Participation, project process, attitudes to WID, for women only vs integrated, politics, effect of project on development

## PROJECT ANALYSIS

Constructing a matrix using key programming factors (e. g. participation) and Sahel priority needs (e. g. water) helped participants visualize how they might analyze projects in needs areas for key programming factors. They selected projects with which they had experience, and presented analyses related to the six factors (see footnote page eight for list). They identified problems (perceived, anticipated) and notable successes, listed solutions (actual, proposed), and made recommendations based on the analyses.

## ACTION PLAN

After considering the projects and discussing areas of interest such as absorptive capacity and the role of women's organizations, the group listed ways in which they could be more effective in development programming.

Out of this list and the recommendations arising from the project analyses, a working group compiled findings and recommendations which were cabled to the Sahel missions, regional offices and headquarters. (See Recommendations)

The recommendations are an agenda for action. Workshop participants agreed to discuss them with their co-workers and with host country counterparts, women's organizations and regional bodies, to obtain their inputs and collaboration in devising plans of action which address the recommendations.\* The Office of Women in Development will act as coordinator of feedback among these points.

## FOLLOW UP

A similar workshop with the participation of host country counterpart personnel is recommended within a year's time, to focus on areas inadequately discussed due to lack of time, especially integrated rural development programs.

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\*The Summary and Recommendations are available in French to facilitate these discussions.

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